



# CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY NEWS RELEASE

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## Department of Toxic Substances Control

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### **Mercury Switch Recycling Program Ongoing Success**

**SACRAMENTO** – Citing the collection of an estimated 50,000 mercury switches by California auto dismantlers during the past six months, Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Director Maureen Gorsen said, “California has been a leader in promoting the removal and proper management of mercury switches from end-of-life vehicles. In 2003, DTSC designated mercury switches as universal waste streamlining and simplifying the requirements for removing, collecting, managing, and recycling.”

“California became one of the first states in the nation to receive funding under a national mercury switch agreement, because of DTSC’s regulations and the State of California Auto Dismantlers Association (SCADA) ongoing efforts since 2003. This recent success, the collection of 50,000 switches for recycling, is protective of the environment and is meaningful pollution prevention,” Gorsen added.

The primary source of mercury in automobiles and light trucks is the convenience light switch in hoods and trunks in vehicles prior to the 2003 model year, when auto manufacturers voluntarily phased out their usage.

“The program, and its ongoing success, is consistent with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s environmental goals to support pollution prevention and utilize all available measures to minimize the generation of toxic wastes. This effort demonstrates that environmental regulators, industry, trade associations, and environmentalists can work together in an effort to effectively promote and implement environmental stewardship,” said Gorsen

DTSC worked closely with State of California Auto Dismantlers Association (SCADA) in developing the universal waste management standards for automotive mercury switches and partnered with SCADA to establish programs to facilitate the collection, proper management, and recycling of mercury switches removed from end-of-life vehicles.

In addition, DTSC worked on the national mercury switch agreement which includes a provision providing compensation to dismantlers for removing switches and pays for collection, transportation and recycling.

“SCADA, Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, and environmentalist organizations like Californians Against Waste, all have contributed to the successful development and implementation of this program in California,” said Gorsen.

Mercury is a naturally occurring metal which has several forms. Metallic mercury is a shiny, silver-white odorless liquid. Exposure to mercury occurs from breathing contaminated air, or ingesting contaminated water or food. Mercury is toxic at high levels and may damage the brain, kidneys and developing fetus. Mercury often re-enters the environment from the improper disposal of mercury containing products.

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***The Department of Toxic Substances Control is a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. DTSC’s mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.***